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Beach access topped feedback from public

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This excerpt from a report to Tiny Township Council from chief administrative officer-clerk Doug Luker reflects the range of viewpoints that exist concerning beach access in Tiny Township.

It is reprinted to help further an understanding of the beach access issue.

"Throughout the public consultation process it was clear that one of the biggest issues facing this Township is public access to the waterfront.

"There was a strong sentiment that Township beaches should be available to all residents. Equally as strong was the sentiment that there is a need to manage beaches to ensure their environmental sustainability.

"Submissions received from various members of the public and beach association representatives stressed the need to view Township owned beaches as community beaches', suggesting that access should be limited to those living near or on the beach with limited access for others.

"However, equally as strong was the position that all township-owned beaches should be available to all residents.

"There was a general consensus that the Township should manage its parks and beaches and not encourage or provide open or unrestricted access to the general public (non residents).

"A number of submissions requested clarification on the wording enhanced access'. Generally all respondents either wanted improved access for all residents or conversely restricted access for those living in the area.

"Reasons for improved access included public rights and recreational opportunities for all taxpayers while those supporting restricted access cited environmental concerns, overcrowding and the quiet enjoyment of their properties.

"A number of respondents suggested that the five major parks should be developed to take the load off smaller beach areas. Land identification was seen as an important factor in resolving many issues regarding beach access.

"Arguments were made by some respondents that, given the historical use of some beaches, public use of those beaches should continue notwithstanding private claims of ownership.

"There appears to be a great many residents who are unclear or confused about beach ownership and usage. A number of submissions requested the Township to play a key role in clarifying the current situation.

"It is clear from a number of submissions that the fence at Balm Beach is the focus of much concern and debate.

"In some submissions, successive Council's were seen as supporting beachfront ownership rights over general public access. Examples cited included the Balm Beach fence, current parking strategy, and the real or perceived lack of public information regarding public parks and beaches.

"A number of respondents commented on the current parking strategy that was seen as limiting access to non-beachfront owners. While others however, suggested the Township should implement a more strict parking strategy and enforcement process.

"Parking was seen by some to be a systematic method of restricting access to public parks and beaches. Others saw restricted parking as necessary to ensure safety during busy times."

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